

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 01846 031554Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 SSO-00
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O R 031517Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7472
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
USICA WASHDC

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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: SOPN, SY
SUBJECT: SYRIA CONTINUES TO DEFEND ITS INACTION IN SOUTH LEBANON

1. EDITORIALS IN APRIL 3 SYRIAN PRESS CONTINUED TO DISPLAY SENSITIVITY TO EGYPTIAN-IRAQI CHARGES THAT SYRIA PROVED INCAPABLE OF CONFRONTING ISRAEL'S INVASION OF SOUTH LEBANON. REITERATING PREVIOUS EDITORIALS, TISHRIIN EDITOR AMID AL-KHULI IN FRONT PAGE COLUMN ACCUSES ISRAEL IN COLLUSION WITH EGYPT AS SETTING A "TRAP" FOR SYRIA IN LEBANON. IN UNCHARACTERISTIC CANDOR KHULI STATES: "THE AGGRESSION AGAINST LEBANON WAS INTENDED TO PRESENT SYRIA WITH TWO QUESTIONS: EITHER CONFRONTATION IN CIRCUMSTANCES IMPOSED ON US BY AN ISRAELI
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DECISION AS TO TIME AND PLACE, OR A NEGATIVE ATTITUDE. BOTH OPTIONS ARE DIFFICULT, AND WERE CAREFULLY CALCULATED BY THE ENEMY AND 'ARAB' PARTIES..." KHULI CHARGES THAT THESE PARTIES PREFERRED SYRIA TO OPT FOR WAR.

2. COLUMN THEN GOES ON THE OFFENSIVE CHALLENGING EGYPT TO FIGHT ISRAEL IN SINAI AND BOLDLY CALLING UPON IRAQ TO

SEND ITS TROOPS TO THE GOLAN. CLAIM IS MADE THAT FATAH'S ABU MAHIR (MUHAMMAD GUNAIM) "EXPOSED" THE PAUCITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF IRAQ'S AID AT A RECENT POPULAR CONFERENCE IN DAMASCUS AND THAT THE PLO REPRESENTATIVES DURING THE DAMASCUS MEETING OF THE "STEADFASTNESS FRONT" REVEALED IRAQI ATTEMPTS "TO GET THE RESISTANCE INTO TROUBLE." IN CONCLUSION, KHULI ASSERTS THAT THE GOLAN IS THE "BASIC BATTLEFIELD" AND THAT ANOTHER WAR WILL BE A SYRIAN DECISION--NOT AN ISRAELI ONE.

3. A SIMILAR EDITORIAL IN AL-BAATH ACCUSES IRAQ AND EGYPTIAN RADIO BROADCASTS OF BEING INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM ISRAEL'S IN "CALLING UPON SYRIA TO ENTER INTO WAR IN THE SOUTH. EGYPT, IT DECLARES, HAS ACTED "IN TOTAL AGREEMENT WITH ISRAEL." ANOTHER TISHRIIN COLUMN AVERS THAT THE TIME HAS PASSED "WHEN FOREIGN POWERS AND EMBASSIES WERE PERMITTED TO MEDDLE IN SYRIAN AFFAIRS AND TO TRY TO INFLUENCE ITS DECISIONS..."

4. COMMENT: KHULI IS THE CLOSEST THING TO AN AUTHORITATIVE COLUMNIST SYRIA HAS. HE HAS EXHIBITED SURPRISING CANDOR IN EXPLAINING SYRIA'S DECISION TO REMAIN PASSIVE AND NOT BECOME EMBROILED IN A WAR NOT OF ITS CHOOSING. HIS CALL FOR IRAQI TROOPS TO COME TO THE GOLAN HAS A HOLLOW RING AND COULD REBOUND AGAINST SYRIA IF PICKED UP BY IRAQI MEDIA.
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Message Attributes

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